

Who is eligible for free Pap testing?

The Best Chance Network provides FREE cervical (and breast) cancer screening for women:

- Who are 47-64
- Have no health insurance (or health insurance that only pays for hospital care)
- Who meet certain income guidelines

To find out if you are eligible for these services, call the American Cancer Society at

(800) 227-2345

And ask about the S.C. Best Chance Network

Cervical Cancer Screening Saves Lives!

How you can help:

- Share this brochure with someone you know
- Tell a friend or co-worker about the Best Chance Network
- Become a Best Chance Network Volunteer (800) 227-2345



South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control



What **YOU** Need to Know About
Cervical Cancer Screening and
The Best Chance Network

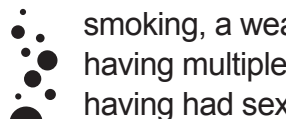
What is cervical cancer?

Cervical cancer is the second leading cause of cancer related death in women worldwide. It begins with abnormal changes in the cells of the cervix. The cervix is the opening to the womb inside your vagina. Not all changes in the cells are cancer or lead to cancer, but it is important to be tested.

What are the risk factors for cervical cancer?

Not getting Pap tests is the most common risk factor associated with cervical cancer. Another leading risk factor is an infection known as HPV (human papillomavirus). HPV is a common virus spread through sexual contact. It is usually prevented by a strong immune system. Two types of HPV cause 70 percent of cervical cancers. Others may cause genital warts and are not cancerous.

There are other factors in addition to infection with HPV that are thought to contribute to the development of cervical cancer. These include:

- smoking, a weak immune system,
 - having multiple sexual partners or
 - having had sex at an early age.
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How can I be tested?

The Pap test (often called Pap *smear*) looks for changes in the cervix that may lead to cancer. A Pap test is obtained by opening the vagina so that the cervix can be seen. A small sample of cells are gently scraped from the cervix and examined under a microscope.

How should I prepare for my Pap test?

- Try not to schedule your Pap test during your period (menses).
- 48 hours before your Pap test, avoid using douches, vaginal lotions or jellies.
- 48 hours before the Pap test do not have sex or insert anything into your vagina, including tampons.

These actions may alter the results of your Pap test.

Understanding your results:

The results may take a couple of weeks to be processed. If the lab finds cell changes, the Pap test result is called “positive” or abnormal. If cells look healthy, the result is called “negative” or normal.

If your results are normal, it is important to continue to be tested on a regular basis to detect any new changes in the cells of your cervix. Your healthcare provider will discuss with you how often a Pap test needs to be performed.

If your results are not normal, further testing may be required. It does not mean you have cervical cancer. Often times, a colposcopy will be ordered. A colposcopy involves looking at the cervix with a strong light and a special scope. The doctor is able to take tiny samples from places he sees on the cervix. This is known as a biopsy. Usually, this is done in a doctor’s office and may be uncomfortable but does not hurt. Your healthcare provider should discuss your results with you.

